



Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, April 19, 2010

Last Wednesday night, the Public Safety committee held a special meeting regarding our police officers. The city manager began by sharing the amount of effort and outreach that has transpired the last few months with city initiatives with regards to our police department.

For the last two years, certain individuals have been lambasting our police force with charges of racial profiling and excessive force. Our police force has more than 400,000 engagements a year with San Jose residents and 99.8 percent of those have no complaints. The City of San Jose has an internal affairs department and an Independent Police Auditor (IPA) for complaints about the police department. With a city as large as ours, we are aware that complaints will no doubtfully happen. However, the complaints are few and far between, and that is something the city can be proud of.

Over the last two years I did not rush to judgment on condemning our police but rather listened to all points to view. As a Councilmember in a representative democracy I represent my entire district population and not just those who attend meetings as 99.5 percent of residents are not able to attend meetings or more so do not want to attend meetings.

Several members of the public spoke before the council and were generally supportive of the police. The speakers were San Jose residents from the West Side and the East Side who appreciated the efforts of our police force. One theme of change however was lengthening the rotation of a police officer from six months to some time longer so as to build even better relationships with residents.

The length of rotations is an issue that cannot be changed with a snap of the finger but rather a negotiation with the police union. I look forward to hearing more about the pros and cons on this specific matter.

Daniel Pham's father spoke emotionally about his deceased son who suffered from mental illness and his loss. Dealing with the mentally ill

even with specific training is very difficult as it is hard to reason with a delusional mind in a stressful situation. My friend from elementary school who suffered from mental illness committed suicide last year thus I have some understanding of the challenges with mental illness.

Another interesting point was raised by two different speakers. One was a Christian biker who was dressed sort of like a Hells Angel. He mentioned that his group had been stopped time to time by the police. He said if he was a police officer he would stop the bikers as well. He pointed out, however, that you should speak to a police officer the way you would like to be spoken to, like the Golden Rule.

As someone who grew up in San Jose I was always taught by immigrant parents to be polite to the police and I have been. It is only since being a Councilmember that I heard a person can verbally throw profanities at a police officer and that is acceptable. Well, it would not be acceptable with my Mom and Dad. An African American speaker who himself pointed out his large Afro said that he has been stopped by the police for decades both on the East Coast and the West Coast based on his appearance.

These two speakers got me thinking that is not just police stopping individuals but also the residents who call the police. Police respond to calls from our residents about suspicious activities and people. Therefore really all of San Jose is responsible. So, when you hear those that are critical of the police they are also critical at the character and prejudgements of our own San Jose residents and need to look in the mirror.

As far as our new IPA, I voted no along with Mayor Reed and Councilmember Constant. We had four well qualified candidates to choose from and I preferred another candidate. I do wish our new IPA great success for the 2.5 year term and beyond.

It is with deep sorrow that Chief Katz will be leaving/retiring from our police force. A straight shooter and a gentleman, he will be missed. My only request is that Captain Kirby please stay for the sake of stability and morale. I would make the same pitch to Chief Katz but I think it is too late.

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